

Affect Versus Effect

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<http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/affect-versus-effect.aspx>

Grammar Girl here.

This is an expanded show based on the original episode covering when to use *affect* with an *a* and when to use *effect* with an *e*.

I get asked whether to use *affect* or *effect* all the time and it is by far the most requested grammar topic, so I have a few mnemonics and to help you remember.

What Is the Difference Between *Affect* and *Effect*?

Before we get to the memory trick though, I want to explain the difference between the two words.

It's actually pretty straightforward. The majority of the time you use *affect* as a verb and *effect* as a noun.

When Should You Use *Affect*?

Affect with an *a* means "to influence," as in, "The arrows affected Aardvark," or "The rain affected Amy's hairdo." *Affect* can also mean, roughly, "to act in a way that you don't feel," as in, "She affected an air of superiority."

When Should You Use *Effect*?

Effect with an *e* has a lot of subtle meanings as a noun, but to me the meaning "a result" seems to be at the core of all the definitions. For example, you can say, "The effect was eye-popping," or "The sound effects were amazing," or "The rain had no effect on Amy's hairdo."

Common Uses of *Affect* and *Effect*

MOST OF THE TIME *AFFECT* IS A VERB AND *EFFECT* IS A NOUN. There are rare instances where the roles are switched, and I'll get to those later, but for now let's focus on the common meanings. This is "Quick and Dirty" grammar, and my impression from your questions is that most people have trouble remembering the basic rules of when to use these words, so if you stick with those, you'll be right 95% of the time.

So, most of the time, *affect* is a verb and *effect* is a noun; and now we can get to the mnemonics. First, the mnemonic involves a very easy noun to help you remember: *aardvark*. Yes, if you can remember **AARDVARK -- A VERY EASY NOUN --** you'll always remember that *affect* with an *a* is a verb and *effect* with an *e* is a noun. Why? Because the first letters of "a very easy noun" are the same first letters as "affect verb effect noun!" That's a very easy noun. Affect (with an *a*) verb effect (with an *e*) noun.

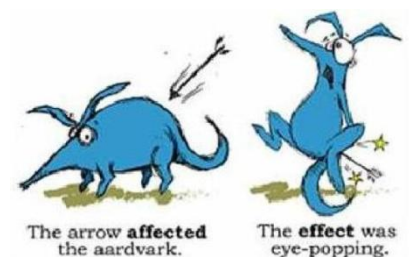
"But why *Aardvark*?" you ask. Because there's also an example to help you remember. It's "The arrows affected Aardvark. The effect was eye-popping." It should be easy to remember that *affect* with an *a* goes with the *a*-words, *arrow* and *aardvark*, and that *effect* with an *e* goes with the *e*-word, *eye-popping*. If you can visualize the sentences, "The arrows affected the aardvark. The effect was eye-popping," it's pretty easy to see that *affect* with an *a* is a verb and *effect* with an *e* is a noun.

The illustration of the example is from my new book. It's Aardvark being affected by arrows, and I think looking at it will help you remember the example sentences; and it's cute. You can print it out and hang it by your desk.

So a very easy noun will help you remember that *affect* with an *a* is a verb and *effect* with an *e* is a noun, and the example will help you see how to use both words in a sentence.

Rare Uses of *Affect* and *Effect*

So what about those rare meanings that don't follow the rules I just gave you? Well, *affect* can be used as a noun when you're talking about psychology--it means the mood that someone appears to have. For example, "She displayed a happy affect." Psychologists find it useful because they know that you can never really understand what someone else is feeling. You can only know how they *appear* to be feeling. And, *effect* can be used as a verb that essentially means "to bring about," or "to accomplish." For example, you could say, "Aardvark hoped to effect change within the burrow."



Exercise : Affect/Effect Spelling Exercise

Fill in the blank with either *affect* or *effect*.

1. Wars _____ everybody, and their destructive _____ last for generations.
2. Television has a strong _____ on public opinion.
3. My mood can _____ my thinking, too.
4. I see that you're trying to _____ apathy, but I know that you really do care.
5. Falling on my head had a bad _____ on my memory.
6. His years of smoking have negatively _____ed his health.
7. This plan will surely _____ significant improvements in our productivity.
8. The patient shows normal _____ and appears to be psychologically stable.
9. The principal's new rules _____ the school.
10. Supply and demand have a direct _____ on the prices of commodities.
11. The _____ of the speech was visible on the faces of the sleeping audience.
12. He's just trying to seem cool; his indifference is completely _____ed.
13. We may never know the full _____ of the radiation leak.
14. The early frost will _____ the crops.
15. What kind of _____ can this quiz have on your dinner tonight?

